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Advancement of women

Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women

Human rights questions: human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives

Letter dated 21 September 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose the statement of the Government of Pakistan (see annex) issued in response to the statement issued by the European Union on 13 August 1999 (A/53/1045, annex).

I should be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items No. 109, 110 and 116 (c).

(*Signed*) Inam ul **Haque**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

99-27270 (E) 011099

Annex

Statement of the Government of Pakistan issued in Islamabad on 21 September 1999

1. Pakistan considers the European Union's statement of 13 August 1999 on so-called "honour killings" as unwarranted and misplaced. The European Union's request to circulate this statement as a document of the United Nations General Assembly is unfortunate and propagates an erroneous and tendentious view.

2. The Government of Pakistan has condemned such abhorrent acts of murder termed as "honour killings" and is bound to deal with them in accordance with the law of the land and the constitution, which allows full protection and equality to all its citizens as well as for the empowerment and full participation of women in the national mainstream. Women enjoy a special and indeed elevated status in our religion.

3. The incident referred to by the European Union does not represent any consistent pattern, nor does it have religious or State sanction. It has evoked shock and indignation in our society. The remedy for any abhorrent customs, which are a residue from the past and inconsistent with contemporary norms and indeed also with Islamic teachings, is education and socio-economic development.

4. The European Union statement is all the more unacceptable because it appears to target Pakistan over an isolated incident, while ignoring incidents of large-scale violence against women and minorities elsewhere in the world. Especially surprising is the failure of the European Union to condemn the use of rape as an instrument of policy in Indian-occupied Kashmir, as part of the reign of terror and repression that has been unleashed upon the Kashmiri people by India.

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Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 106
Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/82, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of that resolution to it at its fifty-fourth session through the Commission for Social Development. The Secretary-General submitted an interim report (E/CN.5/1999/5) to the Commission, which focused on progress in implementing the priorities for action to further equalization of opportunities of persons with disabilities, as identified in operative paragraph 4 of the resolution. The present report should be read in conjunction with that report.

II. Overview of recent policy and programme activities

A. Activities of Governments

2. In paragraph 4 of its resolution 52/82, the General Assembly encouraged Governments to examine key social and economic policy issues related to equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities, in particular (a) accessibility, (b) social services and safety nets, and (c) employment and sustainable livelihoods. In response to a note verbale, replies were received from 24 countries or areas: Armenia, Austria, Argentina, Belarus, China, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Honduras, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Malta, Mongolia, Norway, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, Singapore, Spain, Sweden and Uruguay. Information provided suggests that much governmental action centres around formulation of national plans of action and the establishment and strengthening of national coordinating bodies, legislative measures and cultural activities, both to promote awareness of disability issues and to engage persons with disabilities in cultural and social life.

1. Accessibility

3. Replies from States members of the European Union indicate that a number of national codes have been adopted for accessibility and barrier-free environment based on the principles of securing mobility and full accessibility for persons with disabilities. In this regard, implementation of accessibility codes and regulations aims to create an obstacle-free, safe environment for persons with disabilities. For instance, many roads and public areas have been designed with a view to responding to the needs of persons with disabilities. Most public buildings are now easily accessible to persons with disabilities in Germany. In Austria, accessibility codes and regulations have been adopted, by which architects and buildings engineers are required to receive training in accessibility standards as parts of their professional qualifications. To meet the requirements for persons with disabilities with regard to accessibility, Greece has enacted law 2430/96 implementing the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, stressing the importance of integrating disability in the policies of the Government. In this regard, a new institutional framework has been created to ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and to guarantee their equal rights in various aspects of social and economic life. During the biennium 1998-1999, the reforms of the general building codes were adopted to improve accessibility to public buildings and other public areas removing architectural obstacles and barriers. New public transports provide full accessibility to persons with disabilities. In Finland, the disability policy programme prepared by the Finnish National Council on Disability in 1994-1995 is based upon the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. In an effort to enhance awareness and develop accessible transportation, the Ministry of the Environment has set up working groups on accessibility and launched pilot efforts throughout the country. Spain has created a special commission, whose functions encompass the competencies of all Ministries of Government.

4. A number of countries or areas are addressing accessibility of persons with disabilities by means of new legislative measures to change infrastructure in rural areas as well as in urban communities, as reported by Armenia, Belarus, China, Cyprus, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, Israel, Japan, Malta, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Singapore. For example, Belarus reports on modification of construction codes for public areas, which build upon earlier national legislation on social protection and rehabilitation of disabled persons. In Japan, governmental support has been given to independent regional programmes to improve the well-being of people with disabilities. Following the proclamation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002), the Government of Mongolia adopted in 1998 the national plan of action for the improvement of the situation of persons with disabilities 1999-2004. The Government of China is improving environmental accessibility for persons with disabilities through adoption of the design code of urban roads and buildings for the accessibility of persons with disabilities; and barrier-free design has been introduced in the academic curriculum of the construction design. The

Ministry of Home Affairs of Malta recently declared that all new public buildings of "major use" must be accessible, with immediate effect; the Ministry also is speeding the process of implementing building regulations to promote access for all.

5. The data indicate that countries in Latin America are emphasising the importance of engaging persons with disabilities in all aspects of social life. Special committees have been created in Argentina to improve the coordination of disability issues, in close cooperation with the governmental and non-governmental communities; and catalytic activities are being undertaken in such areas as transportation, housing and telecommunications.

2. Social safety nets and social services

6. Replies from Governments suggest concern with establishing legal protection and guarantees regarding social safety nets for persons with disabilities. The replies also indicate a focus on medical, social and psychological rehabilitation services to improve the lives and well-being of persons with disabilities. The Government of the Republic of Moldova reports on the development of social networks, involving both governmental and non-governmental bodies and organizations, and the decentralizing of social services for persons with disabilities. The Government of Armenia reports that it has taken numerous measures to guarantee a social safety net for persons with disabilities.

7. Innovative arrangements by many Governments have been introduced to provide for long-term care through a combination of benefits in cash and in kind. These may be provided as an integral part of social services, such as measures to assist persons with disabilities to participate in community life. Other approaches include legislation and measures to promote social integration of persons with disabilities. For instance, in Georgia, legislation has been adopted on medical and social expertise concerning persons with disabilities. The Philippines promotes policies on access to education, health care, professional training, and information towards the integration of the concerns of persons with disabilities in various agenda and plans. The Ministry of Health of Israel reports that it has enriched rehabilitation services for persons with mental disabilities, occupational rehabilitation, and social and housing services. The Government of Honduras is supporting the introduction of classes on rehabilitation and disability in the curriculum of the primary and secondary schools as well as in the universities.

8. The Government of Sweden reports that in many respects, Swedish society has become more accessible to persons with disabilities over the last decade, mainly through the development of the general welfare system, which takes specially directed efforts to advance the status of persons with disabilities. In Norway, the main goal of Government policy concerning persons with disabilities is full participation and equality. Disability is integrated in the policy-making of all branches of the Government and is not exclusively a question of health and social affairs. The Government of Singapore has also adopted the goal of full participation of persons with disabilities and equality. Singapore has initiated several measures based on the principle that the care and welfare of persons with disabilities should be the concern of the family, the community and the Government. To further implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, Uruguay focuses on promoting equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities, and has created a national commission for persons with disabilities to pursue the goal of raising public awareness and integrating persons with disabilities in society.

3. Employment and sustainable livelihoods

9. Replies suggest a number of innovative measures taken to integrate persons with disabilities in a social and economic life. For instance, several countries or areas reported on recently enacted legislation or amendments concerning the employment of persons with disabilities. For example, Austrian policies are based on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities and their integration into the mainstream labour market. Germany reports that persons with disabilities are guaranteed to enjoy a "social right", independent of the cause of their disability, to be secure of their place within the community, particularly in employment. In Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Equal Opportunities Commission, a statutory body, promotes equalization of opportunities, *inter alia*, by means of assisting in advocacy, monitoring and initiating catalytic actions within the framework of relevant legislative instruments. The Parliament of Greece enacted law 2643/98 to promote employment of persons with disabilities in the public and private sectors. The law provides an innovative ways for persons with disabilities to be part of the mainstream workforce and strengthens opportunities for self-employment through subsidy programmes. The Government of Cyprus reports on the recent adoption of a policy to promote full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in the social and economic life of the country. In Mexico, a new programme of scholarships was designed for persons with disabilities to facilitate their integration in the labour market during their unemployment.

B. Activities of the United Nation system

10. Within the United Nations Secretariat, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat reports that, at its forty-second session, in 1998, the Commission on the Status of Women considered a report on older women and support systems (E/CN.6/1998/6), which noted that women aged 65 and above could expect to spend a greater portion of their remaining years with functional disabilities than men and the need for specialized support systems. In its conclusions on the issue of "violence against women", the Commission recognized that women and girls with disabilities, among other priority groups, could be particularly affected by violence and recommended development of special assistance programmes. At its forty-third session, in 1999, the Commission considered the critical area of "women and health". In its agreed conclusions, the Commission recommended, *inter alia*, that special attention be accorded to women with disabilities to empower them to lead independent lives.[1] The Department of Public Information and the system of United Nations information centres report organizing periodically book exhibitions and lectures, seminars and special events to publicize activities of the United Nations to promote equalization of opportunities of persons with disabilities. The United Nations Radio Service has produced more than 11 radio magazines on selected disability issues; and the United Nations Visitors Service has ensured that the public tour route at the New York Headquarters is accessible. The Department distributes its guide to the United Nations buildings and services for persons with disabilities at all major meetings and briefings at Headquarters. Since the adoption of the "Habitat Agenda",[2] the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements has intensified activities related to persons with disabilities. Its journal *Habitat Debate* (vol. 4, No. 4, 1998) had the theme "Cities for all", and included an article entitled "Disabled but not unable". Promotion and protection of the human rights of persons with disabilities is an important element in the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The High Commissioner cooperates with the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development. In its resolution 1998/13, the Commission on Human Rights expressed concern that the situation of armed conflict has devastating consequences for the human rights of persons with disabilities, and encouraged non-governmental organizations to cooperate closely and provide information to the concerned human rights monitoring bodies and the Office of the High Commissioner.

11. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) reports that at a subregional follow-up conference to the World Summit for Social Development that it organized in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, participants recommended, *inter alia*, enhanced social protection systems for vulnerable people including persons with disabilities. ECA reports that member States in eastern and southern Africa have instituted measures to protect and create employment opportunities for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has created a Web page on the Internet on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002) at:

http://www.unescap.org/decade

ESCAP supports the Agenda for Action of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002) through close collaboration with the Subcommittee on Disability-related Concerns of the Regional Inter-Agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP). The Subcommittee meets biannually as a consultative forum, with working group meetings convened to develop joint action on priority issues. Subcommittee efforts have resulted in (a) formulation of targets for implementation of the Agenda for Action; and (b) identification of annual Decade campaigns, hosted by an ESCAP member Government, and projects to address critical regional issues and promote full participation and equality of persons with disabilities. ESCAP has directed special attention to promotion of accessible environments in its support of the Decade. During 1998, ESCAP issued a revised edition of its guidelines on promotion of non-handicapping physical environments. In cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), ESCAP organized a regional technical consultation on developing effective placement services for persons with disabilities (Singapore, March 1999). The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) co-organized, with the Saudi Center for the Rehabilitation and Training of Blind Girls at Amman, a vocational training project to upgrade the skills of blind girls and women in the ESCWA region. The Center now is a permanent regional training facility with high quality technical equipment. Thirty-nine Arab blind girls and women have been trained to date in basic computer skills; a training manual has been published in Braille, Arabic and English. As discussed in more detail in the following section, ESCWA cooperated with the Ministry of Social Affairs of Lebanon and the Lebanese Company for Development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District (SOLIDERE) to publish *Accessibility for the Disabled: A Design Manual for a Barrier-free Environment* (Beirut, SOLIDERE, 1998). The *Manual* documents planning for reconstruction and

development of a barrier-free Beirut central district. United Nations headquarters at Beirut was designed and constructed in accordance with accessibility standards discussed in the *Manual*.

12. Treaty bodies of the United Nations system continue with their efforts to improve the situation and human rights of persons with disabilities. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights considers the situation of persons with disabilities in the general trend of development and discusses promotion and protection of their rights (see E/1999/22). The Committee on the Rights of the Child examines the situation of children with disabilities while considering reports of States Parties (see A/53/41). The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted general recommendation No. 24 on article 12 (Women and health) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women at its twentieth session in 1999, which acknowledges that women with disabilities often do not have physical access to health services. The Committee noted that States Parties should take appropriate measures to ensure that health services are sensitive to needs of women with disabilities and respectful of their human rights and dignity.

13. Among the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, the United Nations Children's Fund reports that it is directing special attention to disability prevention and to the care and protection of children with disabilities. Major progress is reported in addressing vitamin A deficiency, a leading cause of blindness, mental retardation and stunting; in accelerating polio vaccination; and in preventive measures for elimination of guinea worm. Efforts also focused on improving access to basic education and community-based services for children with disabilities, which included (a) training teachers in Mali to detect disability among school children, assisting teacher training in Bosnia and Herzegovina; (b) conducting a national disability study in the Gambia; (c) assisting studies on childhood disability in Armenia, Jordan, Rwanda, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the United Republic of Tanzania; (d) supporting a pilot initiative to include children with disabilities in mainstream schools in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Egypt undertook an evaluation of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)-supported community rehabilitation efforts for children with disabilities. UNICEF continued support of mine-awareness programmes in several countries. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched on 28 May 1999 a World Wide Web-enabled database on the rural disabled located at the following location:

http://www.fao.org/sd/PPdirect/rurald/default.htm

The aim of the database is to provide users with access to selected information on the rural disability issues worldwide. FAO observed the 1998 International Day of Disabled Persons, on 3 December, with a seminar in cooperation with the Italian Red Cross on the theme "Anti-personnel mines: a major cause of handicaps; what can we do about it?". The International Civil Aviation Organization continues development of international standards and recommended practices, which address accessibility by persons with disabilities in all aspects of the air transport chain. The standards require contracting States to take all necessary steps to ensure that persons with disabilities have adequate access to all air services. The International Labour Organization reports that an emerging area of concern is rapid responses to employment needs of persons with disabilities in countries emerging from armed conflict. The ILO code of practice on the management of disability-related issues in the workplace, scheduled for completion by 2000, combines all areas of ILO action on disability issues and provides guidance on effective management concerning disability issues. In connection with preparations for the upcoming global conference on the theme "Education for all: assessment 2000", the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) will include a thematic study entitled "inclusive education" to highlight developments worldwide over the past 10 years with respect to the participation of disabled learners in education. The disability and rehabilitation programme of the World Health Organization (WHO) reports special attention is directed to low-income countries in its global disability and rehabilitation activities. WHO established in 1998 a global network for monitoring disability issues and trends in rehabilitation. During 1998, WHO initiated cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on disability of the Commission for Social Development to collect information for monitoring the implementation of four of the Standard Rules — medical care, rehabilitation, support services and personnel training. WHO circulated for comments during 1999 its draft "policy on disability" that addresses medical and social aspects of disability.

14. The World Bank reports that it has identified a total of 11 ongoing projects, as well as several others in the pipeline, that directly benefit persons with disabilities, and is currently preparing a brochure on this topic for public distribution. A major goal of the World Bank is to raise the quality and quantity of Bank products serving persons with disabilities, which is to include strengthening the link

between the United Nations Standard Rules and the poverty alleviation mission of the Bank.

15. Inter-agency cooperation during the period under review was task-based and involved projects of interest to selected programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nation system. For instance, UNICEF and WHO report co-sponsoring training workshops for East and West Africa (Zimbabwe and Benin, respectively) on community-based rehabilitation. UNICEF and UNESCO collaborated in the organization of an international consultation on "Early childhood education and special educational needs". ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF and WHO co-sponsored a Central Asia subregional seminar on the theme "Multi-sectoral collaboration for equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities" at Bukhara, Uzbekistan.

16. The International Initiative Against Avoidable Disability (IMPACT) is a joint initiative and continues under co-sponsorship of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), WHO and UNICEF. IMPACT reports that its current priorities include: immunization in areas of low coverage; control of disabling consequences of micro-nutrient deficiency; safe motherhood initiatives, including the training of traditional birth attendants; early identification, treatment and curative interventions; and research on the link between disability and ageing.

17. On 15 and 16 June 1999, UNDP convened at Geneva an inter-agency consultation on disability, with representatives of selected United Nations programmes and specialized agencies, the World Bank and the Special Rapporteur on disability of the Commission for Social Development. However, a report on the proceedings and the results of the consultation have yet to be issued.

C. Activities of non-governmental organizations

18. Inclusion International, which is concerned with intellectual disability issues, supports its membership by focusing on human rights issues, organizing seminars and conferences in developing countries, and promoting information exchanges. Inclusion International representatives participated in discussions on the design of policies on bio-ethical concerns, family support, inclusive education, employment and health promotion. The International Disability Foundation (IDF) reports that its advocacy and action programme directs special attention to increase awareness and support for implementation of the United Nations Standard Rules in developing countries. IDF used the occasion of the 1998 observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons to launch its *World Disability Report*. The World Blind Union (WBU) is developing strategic options to address the full spectrum of blindness, such as youth, blind women, the elderly and the multiple handicapped. International and regional WBU leaders have been contributing to the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002). The World Federation of the Deafblind was established in 1997 with the objective of advancing the rights of deafblind persons at the international level. Information is disseminated through publication of *The International Newsletter of the Deafblind*. As a result of its promotional efforts, the World Federation reports increased interest in deafblind issues; for instance several Latin American countries have formed national organizations. The World Federation is scheduled to hold its first General Assembly in 2001, in connection with the sixth Helen Keller World Conference on the Deafblind. The World Federation of the Deaf cooperated substantively with a number of international organizations, including the UNDP assistive technology project.

19. The Open-ended International Working Group on Disability and Development represents a hybrid form of cooperation between the non-governmental community, bilateral donor agencies and interested international organizations. The Working Group was established following the 1997 Global Workshop on Children with Disabilities in Developing Countries (Washington, D.C., 5-7 February 1997), which was co-financed by the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability.[3] The Division for Social Policy and Development represents the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in meetings of the Working Group and provided a venue for its spring 1998 meeting. UNESCO provided the venue for the April 1999 meeting of the Working Group.

III. International norms and standards related to persons with disabilities

Introduction

20. The third quinquennial review and appraisal of implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/52/351) discussed the emergence of awareness of a broad human rights framework to promote the social, economic and cultural rights as well as the civil and political rights of persons with disabilities. The broad human rights framework for persons with disabilities draws upon the considerable body of international norms and standards in the social, economic,

cultural, civil, and political fields, and reflects international concern with development agenda that are participatory and inclusive and contribute to improved well being and livelihoods for all.[4] Inclusion of the human rights of persons with disabilities as specific policy concerns, in such documents as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights,[5] the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development,[6] and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women[7] reflect international recognition of a broad human rights approach to advance the status of persons with disabilities in mainstream development.

21. There is growing recognition in contemporary international law that States should incorporate international norms and standards in their national legislation. While means chosen to promote full realization of economic, social and cultural rights of persons with disabilities will differ from one country to another, data suggest that there is no country in which a major policy or programme effort is not required. The obligation of States Parties to international legal instruments to promote progressive realization of relevant rights to the maximum of their available resources requires Governments to do more than simply abstain from taking measures that might have a negative impact on persons with disabilities.

22. The Charter of the United Nations identifies fundamental obligations of Member States to ensure respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. While not legally binding, there are in addition a number of general conventions and recommendations and disability-specific international instruments[8] that are applicable to policies, programmes and legislation to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. The broad human rights approach to disability, therefore, takes the view of advancing the rights and well being of all people, regardless of disabilities, through promotion of implementation of general and disability-specific international instruments that encompass civil and political to economic, social and cultural rights for all.

Recent activities

23. A significant initiative in promoting awareness and building national capacities for broad human rights approaches to persons with disabilities was taken in April 1998 by the Government of the Dominican Republic, in cooperation with members of the non-governmental community. The Government was assisted substantively by Disabled Peoples International (DPI), an international non-governmental organization. With the able participation of the Dominican Association of Disabled Persons (FENDID) and the Dominican Association for Rehabilitation (ADR), DPI planned and organized a seminar for Central America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean on training of trainers in monitoring the implementation of the United Nations Standard Rules for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (Santo Domingo, 13-18 April 1998). Jaime David Fernández, Vice-President of the Dominican Republic, opened the seminar, which provided a forum for a wide range of interested communities to share experience and formulate action plans to promote equalization of opportunities by, for and with persons with disabilities.[9] As a follow-up, the international consultant team for the seminar recently published on the Internet an English version of the substantive seminar presentations (http://www. worldenable.net) and established an on-line forum for discussions on promotion and monitoring the implementation of the Standard Rules (http://www. worldenable. net/ srdiscuss).

24. As a means to identify priorities for research and action to further implement international norms and standards concerning persons with disabilities, Boalt Hall School of Law of the University of California at Berkeley, in cooperation with the World Institute on Disability, organized an international expert meeting on international norms and standards relating to disability (Berkeley, 8-12 December 1998). The meeting brought together leading experts in law and disability policy, representing all regions and legal systems, to review and discuss issues and trends related to the application of international norms and standards in the design of disability-sensitive legislation and policy options. Meeting participants formulated recommendations on research, policy options and technical guidelines to assist interested parties — governmental and non-governmental — in improving national legal and policy frameworks to further equalize opportunities by, for and with persons with disabilities.[10]

25. In the light of the interest expressed by Governments, the non-governmental community, academic institutes and professional societies in international norms and standards concerning persons with disabilities, the Division for Social Policy and Development recently published on the Internet a draft compilation of international norms and standards relating to disability (http://www.un.org/esa/ socdev/discom00.htm. The compilation provides a brief introduction, concise guidance and references to international instruments, norms and standards concerning persons with disabilities adopted by competent

intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations system and other regional systems. The draft compilation was published on the Internet because its size — 300 pages in draft — made wide distribution impractical. Internet publication has contributed to substantive dialogue among interested communities on policies, legislation and programmes concerning persons with disabilities, which in turn has added to its value as resource for interested Governments and other parties to use and consult.

26. Experience to date suggests that as a result of consultation, interpretation and implementation of the vast existing body of international norms and standards concerning persons with disabilities by interested bodies and organizations — governmental and non-governmental — a new set of communities of disability-sensitized policy makers, programme specialists, academics and advocates has emerged. Together, they are contributing to a process of promoting and developing international norms and standards that are universally applicable and would thereby further the advancement of the rights of all.

IV. Data and statistics concerning persons with disabilities

A. Activities of the United Nations Statistics Division

27. In paragraph 5 of its resolution 52/82, the General Assembly requested Governments to cooperate with the United Nations Statistics Division to improve statistics and indicators on disability. Implementation and monitoring of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons as well as the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities place great demands on countries and international organizations for the development of data and statistics. Knowing the numbers of persons with disabilities in a country and monitoring equality of opportunity and achievements made in terms of economic, social, political and cultural rights requires an enormous amount of current and reliable data.[11]

28. One major set of activities concerns the improvement of statistical concepts, methods and data-collection programmes. The key initiative in the Division's methodological work during 1998-1999 is the preparation of the guidelines and principles for the development of impairment, disability and handicap statistics. This publication is directed to statistical offices and research organizations, and provides guidelines on the collection of impairment, disability and handicap (IDH) statistics in national censuses and surveys, and their analysis and dissemination for policy purposes. Preparation of the handbook has been supported by the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Netherlands, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability. The expected publication date is mid-2000. The document complements the *Manual for the Development of Statistical Information for Disability Programmes and Policies*,[12] which is aimed at a wider audience. The *Manual*, published in 1996 in English, has since been published in Arabic, Chinese, French, Spanish and Russian.

29. Disability was also included as a topic for the first time in the revision of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*.[13] The *Principles and Recommendations* were published in English in 1998 and subsequently in Arabic, Chinese, French, Spanish and Russian.

30. The Statistics Division is cooperating with WHO in the development and testing of the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps — Beta-2 (ICIDH-2).[14] It also is working with the United States National Center for Health Statistics to develop standard procedures for coding disability data to the ICIDH-2.

31. The second principal set of activities concerns the compilation and dissemination of statistical data on disability to make these available to a wide set of users. A first output will be a Web site on the United Nations Statistics Division home page on the Internet (http://www.un.org/Depts/unsd), containing statistics on national prevalence of disability by sex and age, scheduled for publication before the end of 1999. The data are part of the Disability Statistics Database (DISTAT), version 2, which is currently being prepared. DISTAT, version 2, includes data from over 100 countries, up from 55 in the previous version, and about 186 studies, more than double those in DISTAT, version 1. Given new developments in database software, DISTAT 2 is a more flexible system than the previous version. The next phase of work on DISTAT 2 will involve developing dissemination plans and data checking. It will begin late in 1999 once the Internet site is completed. This work has been supported by SIDA and the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability, and has been undertaken in cooperation with the Disability Unit of the Division for Social Policy and Development.

B. Selected activities of non-governmental organizations

32. As part of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, the Danish Council of Organizations of Disabled People (DSI) commissioned in 1995 the Institute of Political Science at Aarhus University to develop an index through which implementation of the United Nations Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities could be monitored. The project was funded by the Danish Development Agency, Danida. The index consists of 25 questions about the 22 Rules. Because so much importance is given to access (Rule V), education (Rule VI) and employment (Rule VII), two questions are included on each of these. Each question is to be answered by rating the degree of fulfilment on a scale from 0 to 6, with a maximum possible score of 150 points. By adding all 25 scores and dividing the total by 1.5, a country's result is obtained. As reported in *Disability'99: The World Disability Report*,[15] published by the International Disability Foundation, statistics from 46 countries have been analysed by the University of Aarhus. Their findings indicate that just over half of the surveys in support of the index have been conducted in "industrialized countries" and 25 per cent are from developing countries, which suggests strong global awareness of the human rights of persons with disabilities.[16]

V. Accessibility at United Nations Headquarters

33. In paragraph 9 of its resolution 52/82, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to develop a plan to increase the accessibility of the United Nations, its offices and meetings. In cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Management of the United Nations Secretariat reconvened the Task Force on Accessibility at United Nations Headquarters. Also participating in Task Force meetings were representatives of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, the Department of Public Information, the Office of Human Resources Management and the Office of Central Support Services.

34. A new perspective on accessibility at United Nations Headquarters in New York is provided by the preparation of a long-term capital master plan by the Office of Central Support Services. The intent of the plan is to prepare a coherent programme of physical improvements required over a 25-year period to bring United Nations facilities into conformance with relevant building codes and standards as well as to allow for cost-effective operations and support of the needs of various building users. The plan focuses on the immediate United Nations Headquarters complex and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) building in New York. Findings from the initial phase of the plan (overview report and conditions assessment) indicate that the United Nations Secretariat has achieved a modest level of physical accessibility either through service policy or through physical changes, partly because of the generous spaces of the original buildings. Work remaining to be done to achieve more accessible facility falls in several categories. For instance, many remaining items are essentially maintenance work, which is being accomplished through regular maintenance staff. Certain items are to be corrected as renovations occur. One example is door hardware: conventional door knobs are replaced with lever hardware when office renovations are scheduled. Should the long-term capital master plan proceed or in the course of future large-scale renovations in general, entire areas will be taken out of service for improvements to all services, including sprinklers, fire alarms, heating, ventilating and air-conditioning, lighting replacements, information cabling and any safety corrections. During the course of the renovation work, remaining accessibility deficiencies will also be corrected in each area. Accessibility requirements also form a constituent standard in the design of building infrastructure replacements. Work expected to be performed under the plan includes an accessible entry to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library at 42nd Street, improved accessibility to the conference rooms, and the addition of accessible toilet facilities in areas where this requires significant construction. As a result of discussions of the Task Force, the issue of improving accessibility within the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and between the Library and the remainder of the United Nations Secretariat complex may be prioritized in advance of implementation of the plan.

35. As in many existing buildings, at United Nations Headquarters there are several accessibility conditions that cannot be ameliorated through physical alterations but which must be addressed by the use of technology. The most direct example is the interpreter booths, which by their very purpose overlook conference rooms. The booths are small and are generally reached through stairways and comparatively narrow corridors. Should a wheelchair user be employed as an interpreter or should a current interpreter become wheelchair-bound, the physical setting of interpreter booths poses a significant barrier to employment. In the present configuration of the conference rooms, rebuilding to alleviate this condition would require a complete rebuilding of the entire conferencing facilities. However,

technological advances in interpretation equipment mean that new interpretation areas, constructed as part of the implementation of the long-term capital master plan, could be made accessible and thus would permit barrier-free interpretation in any conference room at United Nations Headquarters or elsewhere. Although existing buildings may present apparently unsolvable physical accessibility problems, technology rather than major reconstruction may present the best total solution to improved accessibility.

36. Task Force meetings also discussed issues related to information technologies to promote accessibility for persons with disabilities within and outside the United Nations system.

37. The meetings noted that accessibility is a means and an end of the goals of full participation of persons with disabilities and equality. Accessible information and physical environments reflect as well the fundamental concern of the Organization with equality and the entitlement to human rights for all.

VI. United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability

38. The Fund became operational in 1980, in connection with the 1981 observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons, and its resources have since supported catalytic and innovative action to further implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. By its resolution 52/82, the General Assembly identified three priorities for action to further the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities, which have guided activities of the Fund for the biennium 1998-1999. **During the 20-month period up to 31 August 1999, the Fund provided nearly US$ 1 million to 35 disability-related projects. Full details are set out in an addendum to the present report.**

Notes

[1] See *Economic and Social Council, Official Records, 1999, Supplement No. 7* (E/1999/27), chap. I.

[2] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[3] The report of the workshop is available at: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/disb971.htm.

[4] See "Overview of international legal frameworks for disability legislation (August 1998)", at: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/disovlf.htm.

[5] *Report of the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 14-25 June 1993* (A/CONF.157/24 (Part I)), chap. III.

[6] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8) chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[7] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[8] General, universal and international human rights instruments include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (General Assembly resolution 217 A (III)), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (General Assembly resolution 2200 (XXI)) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI)). Disability-specific international instruments that address the rights and status of persons with disabilities have been adopted as declarations, resolutions and guidelines by the United Nations General Assembly and include the Declaration of the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons (General Assembly resolution 2856 (XXVI)), Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (General Assembly resolution 3447 (XXVI)), World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/52), the Tallinn Guidelines for Action on Human Resources Development in the Field of Disability (General Assembly resolution 44/70), annex, the *Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness* (General Assembly resolution 46/119) and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (General Assembly resolution 48/96, annex).

[9] The report of the seminar is available, in Spanish, at: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/distisre.htm.

[10] The report of the expert meeting is available at: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/disberk0.htm.

[11] The need for conceptual and methodological work on data and statistics concerning persons with disabilities is suggested by the discussion on data collection and development of indicators in the social and economic sectors, which notes that sample surveys and qualitative studies are not always large enough to provide reliable estimates on indicators or such characteristics as disability that affect a very small proportion of the population (see E/1999/11, para. 20 (b)).

[12] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.XVII.4.

[13] ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/67/Rev.1.

[14] ICIDH-2, at: http://www.who.int/icidh.

[15] London, The Winchester Group for the International Disability Foundation, 1999.

[16] See ibid. pp. 19-20; see also "Rating the rules", by H. Kallehauge, President of the Danish Association of Polio and Accident Victims, at: http://www.dpi.org/rating.html.